

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Kelly Hernandez Naranjo, and I am from New Haven. I'm also part of Semilla Collective and a student at Yale Law School. I am from a mixed-status immigrant family.

My immigrant family and I know the importance of having access to quality healthcare. Growing up, we only visited the doctor when it was absolutely necessary and the pain was unbearable. My dad worked picking strawberries under the blistering sun and even if he was injured, he refused to incur the cost of healthcare. To this day, his back aches after the many years of hard labor without healthcare. For years, my family and I were uninsured.

My parents were undocumented and feared enrolling my siblings and I in Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) although we are eligible. The state government had been clear that they could not receive coverage. My parents intuitively deduced that they should not enroll their children in CHIP. If they did enroll us, would there be consequences from the state? The research and my lived experience show that when parents and caregivers have access to health care, their children are more likely to be insured and to use and receive care.

Until I attended Yale, I had not been to the doctor for a routine check-up for nearly a decade. I now can go to the doctor regularly, but many of our immigrant neighbors and friends in New Haven do not have access to quality healthcare. Since the pandemic, we should know how important health care is. If a large segment of essential workers is left without health care, COVID recovery is even more challenging. Connecticut must be mindful of the health of every single resident—exclusion and individualism can't and won't stop COVID-19.

I stand in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. We need to work towards the goal of having open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

SB284 will bring us closer to a healthier Connecticut. You have the opportunity to "make America what America must become," if I can channel James Baldwin. I implore you to support SB 284. This should be the first step. To move towards health equity in Connecticut, I ask the committee to pass S.B. 284.

Thank you for your consideration,  
*Kelly Hernandez Naranjo*